

Environment Matters – The G8 Summit

Aardvark brings you a special edition of Environment Matters focussing on the environmental issues debated at the recent G8 summit at Gleneagles

News

- **Highlights of the PM's statement to the commons on 11th July 2005.** Tony Blair described climate change as "the most long-term serious threat to our environment". The discussion also included the leaders of China, India, Brazil, South America and Mexico. He went on to set out the four main points achieved by the summit. "First we agreed that Climate Change was indeed a problem, with human activity contributing to it. Second that we had to tackle it with urgency. Third, that in order to do that, we have to slow down, stop and in time reverse greenhouse gas emissions. Gleneagles adopted an action plan to exploit clean technologies... and promote energy efficiency... and to finance investment in clean technologies in emerging economies. Fourth, we put in place a new dialogue involving the G8 and the emerging economies so that when Kyoto expires after 2012, the world can act with unity". ([G8 Gleneagles 2005 website](#))
- **G8 climate deal calls for dialogue, rather than targets** The G8 Summit ended with a call from Tony Blair for a new dialogue on climate change, clean energy and sustainable development. While environmentalists criticised the lack of concrete targets on reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, their fears of "backward steps" on the science of climate change were not realised. ([Environmental Finance 08/07/05](#))
- **No Action on Climate, hopes with EU Presidency** The G8 Leaders appear to have bowed to US pressure and offered simply more talk and no action when it comes to tackling climate change. Their communiqué acknowledged that global warming is a significant threat, which required urgent action to tackle it, but offered absolutely no measurable targets or timetables for doing so. Campaigners now have set their sights on the UK's Presidency of the EU to deliver meaningful outcomes on climate change. ([Edie 15/07/05](#))
- **US adds its name to final communiqué acknowledging human role in global warming** It admitted that humans had a role in climate change and paved the way for a possible post-Kyoto framework. Although the summit language failed to go nearly as far as environmentalists had been demanding, UK sources said the communiqué was far more robust than looked possible a fortnight ago, when the White House was refusing to admit any link between human activity and global warming. ([Guardian 8/07/05](#))

Quotes from the Summit

- "We were never going to be able to resolve differences over Kyoto, or negotiate targets but if it's impossible to bring America into the consensus on tackling climate change, we'll never ensure that the huge emerging economies of China and India are part of the dialogue." [Prime Minister Blair to the press at the end of the conference](#)
- "We haven't made any progress, but at least we haven't gone backwards, which was what we feared." [John Lanchbery, head of climate change at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.](#)
- "This is a very disappointing finale. The G8 have delivered nothing new here and the text conveys no sense of the scale or urgency of the challenge. Bush appears to have effectively stalled all progress. The action plan, without any targets or timetables, will deliver very little to reduce emissions, or to roll out renewables to the scale required." [Tony Juniper, Vice Chair of Friends of the Earth International](#)
- "We never expected to get an agreement on Kyoto and that was not the objective of putting climate change on the agenda." [Environment Secretary Margaret Beckett](#)
- "We have to face down US intransigence and lead from the front. The UK Presidency of the EU should lay the ground for agreement. The EU must demonstrate that reducing carbon emissions does not harm economic growth." [Guy Thompson, Director of Green Alliance](#)

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So what did they commit to?

Energy Savings in the home

- G8 leaders will promote the **International Energy Agency's One Watt Initiative** as part of a package to drive down carbon emissions in the home and will also work to improve the efficiency of **buildings**.

Aviation and road transport

- The G8 pledged to support **scientific research** into the impact of aviation on the environment and have asked the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to provide a **update assessment of the impact of aviation on the climate**.
- G8 nations will look for ways to encourage co-ordination on research into **long-term technological options** which could significantly reduce emissions
- **On road transport**, G8 nations agreed to encourage the sales of more efficient cleaner vehicles; to use labelling to raise consumer awareness of the environmental impact of their choice of vehicle; and to collaborate on research into new technologies.

Energy saving in industry

- The G8 has called on the major multilateral development banks to provide **voluntary energy saving assessments** for major investments in all energy-intensive industrial sectors. This will address one of the key barriers to progress in industrial energy efficiency – lack of information about how much could be saved, and the need to mobilise financial institutions to invest more in this area
- G8 leaders also agreed to work with the IEA to assess **energy efficiency in major industrial sectors** and to develop partnerships to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with these sectors
- Work to support industrial energy efficiency in developing countries will also continue through **TT:Clear, a clearing house on technology transfer**

Cleaner Fossil Fuels

- G8 leaders agreed to support efforts to improve the **efficiency of traditional coal-fired power stations** through a programme of work by the IEA to identify and promote the use of leading edge technology and operating practice
- G8 leaders have asked the IEA and the Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum (CSLF) to develop options for putting in **"carbon capture" technology** in new power stations.
- Steps will also be taken with industry and with interested developing countries research options for **geological storage** of carbon dioxide and explore the potential of technologies for capture and storage

Renewables

- G8 leaders have agreed to launch the **Global Bio energy Partnership** to support the development of biomass and bio fuels markets.
- Work will also be taken forward with the IEA to set up a **network of Centres of Excellence** to develop and share ways of overcoming the technical, regulatory and commercial barriers to improving grid access for renewable sources.

Managing the Impact of Climate Change

- The G8 will work through the Global Climate Observing System to develop fully operational **regional climate centres in Africa**.
- The G8 also committed their support to improve **climate risk management** in multilateral and bilateral development organisations, so that new investments take into account the possible impact of future changes in the climate.
- Leaders looked to the **Millennium Review Summit** in New York in September to contribute to helping developing countries build their resilience to climate change.